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**ALL WINDOWS MANUFACTURED
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Other victims of children's home boss urged to call police

CHILD ABUSER FACES PRISON

By Joe Nimmo

FURTHER victims of a former Oxfordshire children's home boss who sexually abused boys have been urged to contact the police.

There could be more young people targeted by serial sex offender Rodney Smallman during the 1970s and 1980s, an officer from Thames Valley Police said.

The 72-year-old, of Erica Close, Banbury, was unanimously found guilty of 15 counts of indecent assault on male children on Friday, December 19, at Oxford Crown Court.

The assaults took place between February 1976 and March 1983 and throughout his trial Smallman denied anything inappropriate had taken place.

Detective Constable Joanne Waddington, from the Banbury Child Abuse Investigation Unit, said: "I want to thank the victims who have shown a huge amount of courage by coming forward, which enabled Smallman to be convicted of these offences.

"It is possible that despite our extensive enquires further victims have not been identified and I would like to appeal to anyone who is a victim of a sexual offence, regardless of how many years ago the offence took place, to come forward and speak to police.

"Thames Valley Police takes all reports of such offences seriously and will take the appropriate action as a result."

Smallman was cleared of a further five counts of indecent assault but was told by Judge Zoe Smith that he now probably faces an immediate prison sentence.

Summing up the prosecution's case, Giles Curtis-Raleigh said the pensioner also had a previous conviction for indecent assault from the 1980s.

He told the jury: "He has a propensity, a tendency towards this sort of behaviour, and that makes it far more likely that he acted in the way that all these men have alleged.

"The Crown says there is frankly overwhelming power in all these separate people coming forward now with basically similar allegations against a man who has acted this way in the past."

Requesting bail for her client, defence barrister Jennifer Edwards told Judge Smith: "Mr Smallman does have previous convictions, but they were a very long time ago, and since he was released from custody no further matters have come to light.



Rodney Smallman

"And to put it bluntly he has nowhere to abscond to."

She added that Smallman had health problems including diabetes and high blood pressure, as well as having undergone triple bypass surgery.

Judge Smith said she would agree to release him on bail so a medical report and any "mitigating factors" could be prepared for the sentencing hearing on January 12.

None of Smallman's victims, or the home he worked at, can be identified for legal reasons.

Anyone with information can call Thames Valley Police on 101.



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Solstice songs

DANCERS and musicians celebrated the Winter Solstice with a visit to Oxfordshire's mystical Rollright Stones.

About 15 enthusiasts gathered on the shortest day of the year at the neolithic and Bronze Age megalithic monuments, near Chipping Norton.

The day is still celebrated by pagans and druids as a "re-birth" of the sun.

Tony Roberts, *pictured left*, from Beorma Morris, said: "A few of our members are pagans and to them it's an important time of year.

"The tradition is still very much alive and well."



■ Government's plan to lift tax barrier may ease council's looming cutbacks

New budget hopes

COUNCIL tax in Oxfordshire could go up after the Government laid out its plans for local authority income.

The Department for Communities and Local Government said that the Government-imposed restriction on council tax increases would be two per cent – not the one per cent expected by many councils.

As a result, Oxfordshire County Council said that if it opted for a two per cent rise in council tax, the extra cash generated would reduce the strain on the council budget.

By Matt Oliver

A county council spokesman said: "We had assumed that the referendum limit for council tax rises would be one per cent, when in fact it will be two per cent.

"Should a decision be taken in due course to propose a 1.99 per cent council tax rise, this would mean that the pressures on the council's budgets would be lessened by £3.196m."

Oxfordshire County Council's grant from the

Government is to fall by £18.47m next year, the figures have also shown.

Last week, the Department for Communities and Local Government said the authority's revenue support grant would fall from £145.61m to £127.14m for 2015/2016.

But it claimed the council would have more money from the Government to spend overall – a total of £478.7m. That is 1.2 per cent up on the current £473m.

The spokesman added: "The council's finance experts are currently analysing the detail of the

Government's announcement.

"It appears that the cut in grants is broadly in line with expectations."

The county council had already planned £64m of savings over the next four years.

This month it also announced another £20m would be necessary due to a dramatic rise in demand for adult and children's social care.

The spokesman said there was more information to come and that the council's budget next year would not be clear until February.

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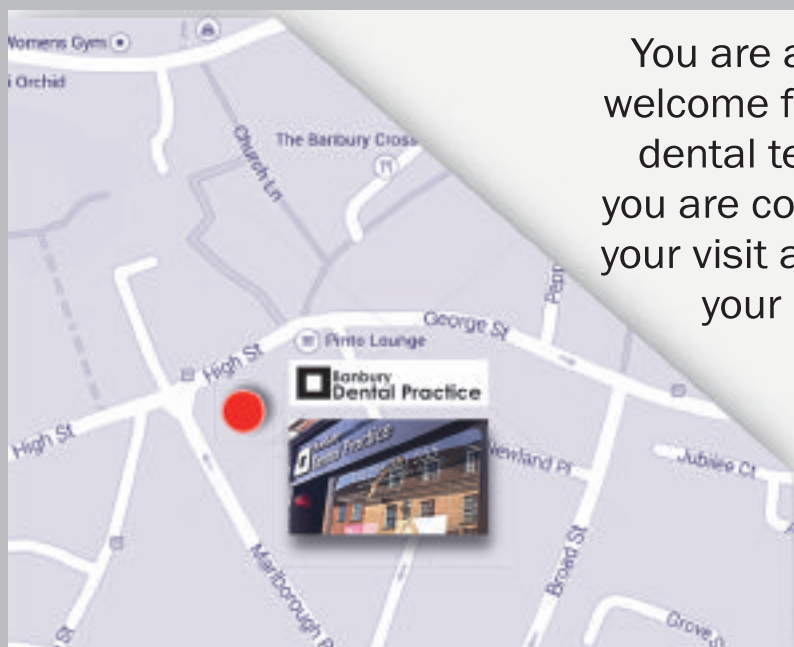
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Boxing Day hunt parade draws in crowd of thousands

THOUSANDS turned out for the annual Boxing Day Heythrop Hunt in Chipping Norton.

The tradition marked its 189th year in fashion, with about 200 horseriders and 36 hounds parading through Market Place before departing for the hunt at 11am.

Secretary of the hunt for 23 years, Guy Avis, 67, said: "It's lovely to see so many people coming out to a traditional part of the English countryside."

Horserace trainer Charlie Brooks, husband of former *News of the World* editor, Rebekah Brooks, said: "I come to the hunt every year, it's a Christmas tradition."

The 51-year-old, who was cleared of perverting the course of justice in the phone-hacking trial in June, said his family had had a wonderful Christmas. He added: "It's the first Christmas that our daughter will be able to remember, it's been lovely."

Mrs Brooks and his daughter were not at the Hunt.

Kidlington farmer Andrew Goffe, 27, who watched the hunt with his two-year-old daughter Iris, said: "There's a misconception that hunting is classist, but it certainly isn't."

"The hunt encompasses all parts of country life."



Simon Lawrence gives a pro-hunting speech

■ Lady made name as a model and editor

Branded 'too beautiful' for broadcasting

By Matt Oliver

LADY Wardington, better known as Audrey White, was a red-headed model once branded "too beautiful" to become a BBC television announcer after an audition.

This was because the public broadcaster thought she would alarm "the folks in Wigan".

Over eight heady years of success in the 1950s, she regularly appeared on magazine covers and in newspaper reports and was known for her striking beauty.

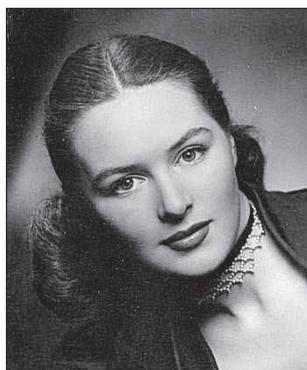
After marrying stockbroker Christopher Henry Beaumont Pease – Lord Wardington – on September 9, 1964, she became Lady Wardington and moved to Wardington Manor in the village, north-east of Banbury.

By the 1980s she had set up a business, Capital and Savings Handling, for wealthy women.

In 1991 she published a book, *Superhints*, of 500 useful tips gleaned from scores of contributors, including Royal Family members, celebrities and newspaper readers responding to her appeals.

It included nuggets from the likes of Dame Judi Dench, Sue Lawley OBE and Sir Terry Wogan, who suggested dousing puppy accidents with soda water before mopping to remove all traces of smell from carpets, and was in aid of Katharine House Hospice, in Adderbury.

A copy even made its way to Princess Diana as a gift from the late



Lady Wardington

11th Duke of Marlborough, former custodian of Blenheim Palace and a hospice trustee, when she opened the building in October 1991.

The idea for the book had come to her after her secretary died of cancer and was cared for at a hospice.

Around their village Lady Wardington and Lord Wardington were well-loved figures and this was dramatically proved in April 2004 when a devastating fire ripped through an entire wing of Wardington Manor.

At the time the couple were on holiday and had left the house in the care of their daughter Helen, her family and the butler.

When the blaze broke the alarm was raised by a postman and a human chain of villagers formed to save hundreds Lord Wardington's

rare books collection.

Some of the rescued atlases would later sell for millions at auction in London, but the manor was severely damaged.

After Lord Wardington's death in 2005, aged 81, Lady Wardington moved to a smaller property in the village.

Margaret Audrey White was born on November 2, 1927 in Bradford, to parents Eva and John, a commercial traveller.

When her father left the family at a young age she was brought up by her mother in North London.

She went to school at Henrietta Barnett School in Finchley and at 16 took a job at a salon.

A young Miss White caught her modelling break when she met Phyllis Digby Morton, editor of *Woman and Beauty*, a customer at her place of work.

She invited her to come for a photoshoot and her career took off.

She would be the cover girl for *Women's Own* and later a fashion editor at *Housewife*.

She first married Jack Dunfee, one of the wealthy British motorists known as "Bentley Boys", in 1953, before marrying Lord Wardington in 1964.

In Wardington, she was also the chairman of Wardington Conservative Association.

Lady Wardington died on November 8, 2014.

She is survived by her adopted children, Lucy, Helen and Christopher.

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InBRIEF**Festival acts announced**

■ **THE Proclaimers**, ex-Marillion singer **Fish** and **Toyah Wilcox** are the first acts to be announced at an annual music festival in Cropredy.

Fairport's Cropredy Convention will be hosted by folk rock legends **Fairport Convention** from Thursday, August 13, to Saturday, August 15.

Student who 'couldn't sew' is a top fashion designer

A FASHION student from Banbury and Bicester College has been chosen as one of the country's top young designers.

Amie Twiner, 17, right, was one of ten finalists in the Young Designer of the Year Award 2014, which is run by The Clothes Show Live and is open to students aged 17 to 25.

Entrants were invited to design an outfit that embodied the style of a city renowned for fashion and their winning entries were

modelled on the catwalk at this year's Clothes Show Live from December 5 to 8 at Birmingham NEC.

Miss Twiner's design was inspired by 1960s London and featured a monochrome mini skirt and top.

She added: "I have always wanted to work in fashion and this course has been a great way of developing my understanding of the industry and the skills required."

"I couldn't sew before I started but now I am able to create my own outfits, having

used software packages to develop and present concepts and designs.

"I am hoping to study fashion illustration at university next year."

The Clothes Show Creative Awards Programme is designed to help students get involved with leading fashion brands.

It is the second year running that students from Banbury and Bicester College, like Miss Twiner who is from Brackley, have been chosen as finalists in the competition.



■ **Body found following motorhome blaze**

Caravan site owner tried to tackle fire

By Alex Regan

THE co-owner of a caravan site where a woman's body was discovered after a fire said he tried to put out the blaze.

Crews were called to the Merryweather Farm in Hook Norton Road, near Chipping Norton, just after 10pm on Thursday, December 18, after reports of a motorhome on fire.

Clint Hillier, 62, said: "I was in the house and one of the couples at the caravan site told me the motorhome next to them was on fire."

"I took a load of fire extinguishers to try and put the blaze out, but it was just too intense."

"The firemen were here in a flash and tackled the blaze quickly."

Five fire engines were sent to the scene and firefighters tackled the fire but Thames Valley Police said they had found the body of a woman.

Spokeswoman Rhianne Pope said there was nobody else in the motorhome.

Mr Hillier said the fire spread to the next caravan but that the couple from Banbury had managed to escape.

His son Carl, 32, who runs the site with him, said: "Thankfully there were only two caravans staying here on Thursday because it's not tourist season."

"We're still a bit shaken by what has happened."

"In the six years we've operated this caravan site we've never had anything like this happen."

Oxford CID and fire investigation officers attended the scene on Friday, December 19, to establish what caused the blaze.



The scene of the fire

Detective Sergeant Mike West said: "We do not yet know what caused the fire and the death of the woman, but we are not treating it as suspicious."

Fire investigation officer Don Crook said: "We are here to assist the police with their investigation and can't disclose any details."

Thames Valley Police said the formal identification of the woman had not yet taken place but the next of

kin had been informed.

Father-of-three and caravan engineer Clint Hillier said: "You hear about these sort of blazes all the time in the caravan community."

"One of the reasons why caravans catch fire is because people overload the electricity board by using household appliances like kettles."

"Caravans aren't homes, and we need to do everything possible to promote caravan safety."

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■ FLASHBACK to the 1960s, when Banbury doctors took on a festive role

When scalpels were swapped for carving knives

By John Chipperfield

DOCTORS at the Horton Hospital at Banbury had a special task at Christmas – carving the turkey.

And that wasn't the only duty they performed for the benefit of patients unlucky enough to spend the festive season in a hospital bed.

Nurse Dawn Griffis, whose maiden name was Alsford, remembers the hectic activity on the wards on Christmas morning. She writes: "All the town dignitaries and their families visited the patients in hospital, even the mayor wearing his chain of office. The physicians and their families also attended.

"Each physician was designated a certain ward and was dressed in a costume that we had made in tune with the Christmas theme on that ward.

"They would entertain patients up and down the wards. Then when the Christmas dinner was brought in, they would carve the turkey and serve it to each patient. Later, the exercise was repeated for the Christmas pudding."

Mrs Griffis, who now lives in the United States, recalls how each ward was a hive of activity for weeks before Christmas.

Staff would decorate on a theme for their ward and decorate the windows, walls, ceilings and beds accordingly.



ABOVE: Dr Ferguson on Christmas dinner duty on the Horton Hospital's B Ward in 1960. Others pictured include Sister Cook, Helena Gill, Jackie Norman and Cynthia Hollowell

The children's wards usually picked a pantomime story. There was a competition to decide the best theme and the winner was announced on Christmas Day. "On Christmas morning, the children not only got gifts from their parents, but there were gifts for each one purchased from the hospital fund. Sister Stewart would buy a gift for each child from her own pocket, and the town also gave gifts. Those from the hospital and town were usually very expensive, such as bikes, dolls prams, train sets etc.

"Parents could be there all day with their siblings – it was a fun time for all.

"The last year I was at the hospital I was working in the operating theatre and the only place we could decorate was Sister's office, which we turned into a witches' cave.

"We made stalactites and stalagmites out of plaster cast – it would have been more appropriate for Halloween. We made a recipe for a witches' brew incorporating the names of those of us who worked in the theatre."



ABOVE: Dr Briggs and Dr Ferguson on Christmas dinner duty on B Ward in 1961 at the Horton Hospital, watched by the Banbury mayor, possibly John Portergill, Pat Ward, Salina Wong, Pamela Cummings and Matron Bourne



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Detective is commended for her work in the child abuse investigation unit

Honour for CID officer

A DETECTIVE who helped convict 12 child abusers in two years has been recognised for her work by Thames Valley Police.

Det Con Natalie Thompson was commended by Chief

By Alex Wynick

Constable Sara Thornton for her work in the Child Abuse Investigation Unit.

Her work led to 12 convictions of sexual offenders

from 2011 to 2013.

She said: "It is not just me, though. We work very hard as a team and a lot of the convictions are team efforts.

"It is a good sense of achievement, firstly because you know you have put all that

hard work into it, but equally for the victim.

"Hopefully they can move on and get closure as a result of the good results.

"It was a combination of the all the cases I had over that time period. I have been able to

progress a lot of cases to court with some good results."

The 37-year-old, who is based at the child abuse investigation unit in Banbury, added: "I suppose it was an area I was interested in and I really wanted to make a difference to the victims of these crimes, and that is what I am very passionate about."

Her cases have included that of paedophile Adam Reeves, who was jailed for eight years in February after the girl he sexually abused secretly recorded his confession.

Reeves – then a 45-year-old IT worker who lived in Bicester until he was charged – admitted seven counts of engaging in sexual activity with a child after a covert recording was passed to the police and played during his trial at Oxford Crown Court.

Speaking at the time, Detective Constable Thompson said: "While we would never encourage victims to put themselves at any risk, we commend the victim for her bravery in taping Reeves and his confession.

"It must have taken a great deal of courage for her to take

action like this and we hope this sentence will go some way to helping her feel her actions enabled Reeves to be brought to justice."

Others officers were also recognised for their efforts at the awards event. They were:

PC Andrew Jennings and his five-year-old daughter, Rowan, were honoured for saving a man's life on Cowley Road, Oxford, in March.

Sgt Scott Evans, from the patrol team in Banbury, and Emma Murdoch, from the Information Research Bureau in Kidlington, were given long service awards for 20 years' service.

Richard Collings received an award for volunteering for five years at the force's headquarters in Kidlington.

Sgt Peter Dillon and Insp Philip Rogers, from Abingdon police station, and head of the control room Supt Howard Stone were honoured on their retirement, all having worked at least 25 years.

Rodney Greenwood, who works at the force's Kidlington HQ, received a shield for 50 years' service.

RIGHT:
Banbury-based
Det Con
Natalie
Thompson
receives her
award from
Chief
Constable Sara
Thornton



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■ More items to go under the hammer

Formula One team's kit is auctioned off

FORMER show cars from the collapsed Banbury-based Marussia Formula One team sold for a total £106,000 at a two-day auction last month.

More than 5,000 bidders registered for the auction at the team's former factory in Overthorpe Road and online.

One of the 2013 show cars, which did not have an engine, sold for £54,000 and the another for £52,000.

About 1,000 items went under the hammer, including the nose section of a Marussia F1 racing car that reportedly fetched £15,000.

Administrators from FRP Advisory were appointed on October 27 which decided to sell the team's assets. The team ceased trading on November 7.

Other items that went under the hammer included a trailer used as a race workshop/office and a Marussia F1 steering wheel sold for a reported £2,200.

The company's fibre-tapered boardroom

By Ben Holgate

table with aluminium centrepiece and Max Chilton Sparco driver's racing suit for a reported £700 were also sold.

Six racing wheels with tyres went for £1,000 each in the auction, conducted by CA Global Partners.

It has been reported the auctions would raise up to £5m.

James Rossiter, a spokesman for FRP Advisory said the proceeds would be used to pay Marussia's creditors.

The physical auction coincided with a parallel sale on auction website eBay, which predominantly involved office equipment.

A further auction of Marussia's remaining assets is to be held on January 21, 2015.

This would include Marussia's three race cars for the 2014 season, minus their engines, as well as about 70 tonnes of trackside kit.

Police display firearms amnesty haul

DURING a two-week amnesty, 85 guns were handed in to police stations across Oxfordshire.

Thames Valley Police ran the "Hand in the Gun" campaign, which ended on December 8.

Local people were urged to drop off

firearms and ammunition without worrying about being prosecuted – although guns suspected of being involved in crimes

would be investigated.

The police station in Banbury had 16 weapons handed in, with nine more at St Aldate's, Oxford, and

60 at Abingdon police station.

Police also received 127 lots of ammunition and a pre-war training grenade.



LEFT and **BELOW:** The rifles, shotguns, revolvers and automatics that were handed in are laid out



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■ Linking up with two other authorities may save £8.9m

Council in talks over merging its services

SERVICES in Cherwell District Council could be shared with two other authorities, potentially saving £8.9m.

The authority has teamed up with South Northamptonshire District Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council to merge the services it provides to residents. It hopes the expected savings will prevent job losses and service cuts in the future.

The councils have yet to decide what services could be shared, but Cherwell District Council leader Barry Wood said these could be "any and all".

The district council provides recycling, leisure centres and community transport, among other things.

Mr Wood said: "We know that local government is in the firing line for more reductions and we take it as practical reality. So it is up to us to find a solution. "People may say on the

By Naomi Herring

one hand it is obvious and some would say the novelty of working together is overdue in local government.

"We are exploring something different and new."

Sharing work among departments of the three councils could save Cherwell £8.9m in total over a ten-year period.

He added that a further £3.3m could be saved by the council over the next decade if the three authorities went on to "buy in" further services together.

This latter idea is yet to be agreed upon by the three authorities.

Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils have already started sharing work, with a shared management team introduced in 2011.

According to Cherwell, this has saved the council more than £3m a year.

The councils now want to expand this scheme to include other areas of their work.

Mr Wood added: "We are confident we have a good basis to go forward with."

"We have seen these changes coming for some time and councils have been careful when employing people. All of these models will lead to reorganisation but we want to avoid redundancies as much as we can."

Councils are increasingly looking at ways to save money ahead of continued cuts in the cash they receive from the Government.

Figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government revealed plans to cut Cherwell's revenue support grant by £1.151m next year.

South Northamptonshire Council leader Mary Clarke said: "We need to think 'outside of the box' and consider new and different ways of working to preserve and protect the future of our district, as well as remaining financially solvent when the Government's revenue support grant begins to decrease."

Proposals will now be subject to a public consultation that will run until February 6, before councillors vote on them early next year.

If all councils are in agreement, the process will start in April 2015.

Feedback on the proposals can be made at tiny.cc/jointworkingproposals



LEFT: Cherwell District Council leader Barry Wood

Call for views on boundaries

A CALL has gone out for Cherwell residents to have their say on how council ward boundaries in the district should work.

The independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England has begun a consultation period on the draft recommendations for reducing the number of councillors covering the area.

As part of the electoral review, the Commission proposed that Cherwell District Council should have 48 councillors in the future, two fewer than the current arrangements.

Those councillors would then represent 16 three-member wards across the district.

Max Caller, chairman of the commission, said: "We are publishing proposals for a new pattern of wards across Cherwell District and we are keen to hear what local people think of the recommendations. Our

review aims to deliver electoral equality for local voters. This means that each councillor represents a similar number of people – so that everyone's vote in council elections is worth roughly the same, regardless of where you live.

"We also want to ensure that our proposals reflect the interests and identities of local communities across the district and that the pattern of wards can help the council deliver effective local government to local people."

Residents can have their say on new council wards, ward boundaries and ward names across the district until Monday, February 16, when the consultation period will end.

To have your say online go to consultation.lgbce.org.uk

InBRIEF

Fewer are arrested over drink-driving

■ SINCE December 1, 27 people have been arrested on suspicion drink-driving in Oxfordshire, Thames Valley Police have revealed. The arrests were part of the forces "Is it worth the risk?" campaign to stop people from driving after drinking alcohol or taking drugs over the festive period. The force said the number of arrests in the scheme across the Thames Valley was down ten per cent compared to the same period last year.

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A year of breakthroughs

By Naomi Herring

IN JANUARY, a Freedom of Information Act request revealed the bizarre animal rescue calls made to firefighters across Oxfordshire that were costing the county £33,800.

Taking the traditional 'cat-stuck-up-a-tree' to another level, incidents including a hamster jammed in an oven, a dog trapped in a sofa and a horse stuck in manure.

The figures revealed that during the previous four years, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service had rescued 181 animals – 53 pets, 28 farm animals and 15 birds – at a total cost of £33,800.

Also in January, Horton General Hospital introduced a new surgery for ear, nose and throat (ENT). Procedures included adenoid removal, surgery on the nose's septum and grommet-tube insertions for glue ear for all ages.

The surgery was introduced to cope with increased demand for ENT services in Banbury and north Oxfordshire according to a trust statement.

Banbury was saved from major flooding thanks to a £14m man-made bund, according to a councillor.

The bund, which officially opened in 2011, was put to test at the beginning of this year after a record breaking rainfall, as reported by the *Banbury Cake*.

The man-made bund on land between the M40 and Daventry Road was "money well spent" according to town, district and county councillor Kieron Mallon.

He said: "I think the whole of Banbury has been saved the heartache that other parts of the country have felt."

Councillors approved plans to extend Banbury's Castle Quay shopping centre in February. Cherwell District Council's planning committee passed the development around the Oxford Canal, proposing a supermarket, cinema, restaurants and hotel.

In March, people in North Oxfordshire were treated to a once-in-a-decade spectacle as the Northern Lights fulfilled the skies.

Green, blue and red natural lights, known as the Aurora Borealis, is normally only visible in Scandinavia.



Above, the proposed development and expansion plans of the Castle Quay shopping centre; left, Sean Woodcock, Banbury mayor; below, mascot Joe Scurr, front right, with Wayne Rooney at England's final World Cup warm-up match against Honduras



Also in March, county highways staff were given £4.7m from the Government to tackle the potholes on Oxfordshire's battered roads.

The Department for Transport announced the emergency payment would help with damage caused by flooding and severe winter weather.

In April, plans for a three-storey, 60-bed care home complete with garden areas and 22 parking spaces were given the go-ahead by Cherwell District

Council. Green Pastures Christian Nursing Home was granted planning permission to build a new home on the corner of Bath Road and Park Road.

Members of the Army Reserve – formerly called the Territorial Army – were welcomed to Banbury during a parade through the town in April.

As part of a reorganisation, 50 reservists previously based in Lincolnshire, Warwickshire and Buckinghamshire joined the 12 part-

time soldiers already stationed at Banbury's Oxford Road base.

May saw 28-year-old Sean Woodcock sworn in as Banbury mayor by the town council, the youngest person on record to hold the role.

In Cherwell District Council elections that month, Labour took two seats from the Conservatives – Banbury Grimsbury and Castle and Banbury Neithrop. This took its number of councillors from five to seven on the 50-seat council.

June's annual Banbury and District Show was called off for the first time since the event started in 2000, due to water-logged ground at Spiceball Park.

The Met Office said the area had seen double the average amount of rainfall in the month leading up to the event.

A football-mad schoolboy fulfilled every fan's dream of walking on to the pitch next to his national heroes.

Nine-year-old Joe Scurr, from Banbury, won the chance to walk into



1. Get activation code



2. Collect documents



3. Enter data

and our youngest mayor



Left, Santa Claus and *Coronation Street* actor Chris Gascoyne, who plays Peter Barlow in the soap, turn on the Banbury Christmas lights; above, the lorry fire on the M40 at junction 11; below, Jean Gardner gives floral hobby horses one last feed before their 'ride' to Banbury Cross



Miami's Sun Life Stadium next to Wayne Rooney before England's 0-0 draw against Honduras.

In July, a serious lorry fire caused significant delays on the M40 southbound at Junction 11 near Banbury.

A hay lorry burst into flames leaving the M40 at a standstill as both directions of the motorway were closed.

The town's annual Town Mayor Sunday event attracted huge crowds, with the star attraction being a parade of

hobby horses. A procession from the town hall to People's Park kicked off the event, which included sporting and dance displays, a fun fair and the traditional hobby horse races.

In August, one of the town's social clubs was saved from demolition after developers of the town's Castle Quay shopping centre project failed to reach an agreement.

The General Foods and Sports Social Club in Spiceball Park Road had been

facing demolition and relocation as part of the redevelopment for Castle Quay shopping centre.

Meanwhile, more than 250 exhibits were on display at the 30th Ardley and Fewcott Gardening Club annual flower and produce show in August.

The show included 87 different categories of competition for fruit, vegetables and flowers at the community hall in Ardley.

In September, the town centre rang

out with the sound of the 2014 town crier's championships, that saw a total of 15 criers take part.

The competition, organised by Anthony Church, the town crier for Banbury and Oxford, judged competitors on diction, volume and bearing.

The town crier for Alnwick in Northumberland, John Stevens, won the competition.

The Battle of Britain's 74th anniversary was commemorated in Banbury

with a military parade through the town.

The parade was led by the town's 1460 Squadron Air Training Corps and went from the town hall in Bridge Street to St Mary's Church in Horsefair.

In October a Banbury primary school was rated good by Ofsted, two years after inspectors said it needed "significant improvement".

Orchard Fields Community School, had been rated inadequate in March 2012 but welcomed the good rating this year after inspectors praised improvements in the school's teaching and governance, along with "dramatically" improved attendance and punctuality.

A long-lost First World War munitions factory was discovered in October.

It was thought all traces of the factory had been destroyed but National Filling Factory Number 9 was found to be a munitions factory near Overthorpe that sent more than four million shells to the frontline between 1914 and 1918.

Banbury-based Marussia Formula One team ceased trading in November, leaving 200 workers without a job.

It initially emerged that the team had placed itself on next year's F1 entry list, but in a turn of events London-based administrators FRP Advisory announced it had failed to secure the investment needed.

Banbury-based Jody Fletcher was named Business Mother of the Year at the Venus Awards that came to Oxfordshire for the first time.

The mother of one and director of Chilli Promotional Products, which sells branded corporate items like mousemats, won the public online vote in the category for women juggling home and work.

In December, Nilay News in Banbury High Street was recognised as the best of its kind in the country for customer service.

The store was named the UK's best CollectPlus store, which is a store-based parcel service that allows people to collect or return online purchases.

Thousands of local people turned to see *Coronation Street*'s Peter Barlow – actor Chris Gascoyne – switch on the Banbury Christmas Lights. The popular event included a firework display, live stage entertainment and a fun fair.



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Stewart
McCheyne,
Wendy Paver
and Jack
Benjamin in *The
Ballad of Rudy*

Children's show has jazz-matazz

GROWN-UPS might find themselves thinking of *The Fast Show's Jazz Club* character while watching this festive musical performance at Banbury's Mill Arts Centre.

Aimed at the over-threes, *The Ballad of Rudy* tells the tale of Rudy the reindeer (Stewart McCheyne), who arrives at the North Pole to try to make the grade when it comes to pulling Santa's sleigh, under the tutelage of Hoo the Owl (Wendy Paver). Except he becomes distracted by the Jazz Penguin (Jack Benjamin).

Unruly Rudy finds himself on a Jazz Odyssey, encountering many other animals on the way to musical enlightenment.

He's told he will only be able to experience the Northern Lights

By Marc Evans

once he has 'got' the Jazz.

There's a meeting with the Fox (also played by Paver) who speaks and sings in scat, who starts Rudy's education – and that of the audience.

We then meet a glum Polar Bear (Benjamin again), who gives Rudy a lesson in singing the blues, plus an environmental heads-up about the melting ice at his home.

There's an anarchic diversion, thanks to some noisy puffins, before a memorable encounter with jazz dame Nina, a grand walrus also played by Paver.

The role shows off her excellent voice, and really gets the crowd singing along.

The Ballad of Rudy is great fun for the youngsters, who joined in with the crowd participation with glee, although it might not hold the attention of the over-fives.

However, at just an hour in length, it's an ideal introduction to the theatre.

The cast of three work hard and enthusiastically to portray the line-up of characters, and they show their talents and versatility with instruments and puppetry as well as singing and acting.

We finish off this charming production with Rudy, Hoo and the Jazz Penguin putting on a final gig. But does Rudy get to pull the sleigh and see the Northern Lights? Well, I'm not giving that away.

All I'll say is that, in the words of Jazz Club, it's all...Nice.

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Film is in the running to win an Academy Award

UNBROKEN (15, 137 mins)
Drama/War/Action. Jack O'Connell, Domhnall Gleeson, Miyavi, Garrett Hedlund, Finn Wittrock, Jai Courtney, Luke Treadaway, Alex Russell, Vincenzo Amato, Maddalena Ischiale. Director: Angelina Jolie.

Angelina Jolie's third feature film behind the camera has the hallmarks of 24-carat Academy Awards bait.

Based on the book by Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken* documents the extraordinary true story of Louis Zamperini, who competed at the 1936 Olympic Games, survived a plane crash during the Second World War then endured torture at the hands of the Japanese in a PoW camp.

Somehow, Zamperini weathered the pain and returned home a national hero.

Jolie's admiration for her subject is evident in every gorgeously crafted frame of this life-affirming biopic, which is blessed with Roger Deakins' stunning cinematography and an elegiac score from composer Alexandre Desplat.

Wince-inducing scenes of cruelty warrant the film's 15 certificate but the violence always serves the narrative and is never gratuitous.

Taking to heart the words of Louis's brother – "If you can take it, you can make it" – we stare into the heart of darkness with Zamperini, willing him to overcome his horrific ordeal.

As a boy, Louis (Jack O'Connell) drives his parents (Vincenzo Amato, Maddalena Ischiale) to distraction with his fisticuffs.

Louis narrowly avoids reform school and his older brother, Pete, (Alex Russell), a star of the school athletics team, decides to channel his sibling's energy and aggression into running.

These efforts reap rewards and Louis is selected to represent America at the Berlin Olympics.

"A minute of pain is worth a lifetime of glory. You remember that," whispers Pete.

Louis finishes a creditable eighth after a blistering final lap of 56 seconds.

War breaks out and Louis serves in the US Army Air Force alongside best friend Russell Phillips (Domhnall Gleeson).

Their B-24 bomber crashes into Pacific, killing everyone except Louis, Russell and fellow recruit Francis McNamara (Finn Wittrock).

The men drift through shark-infested waters with little food or water until a Japanese crew picks them up.

The men are tortured and separated.

Louis is sent to a PoW camp where sadistic commander Mutsuhiro Watanabe aka The Bird (Miyavi) sets out to break the Olympian's spirit.

Unbroken soars close to greatness, emboldened by tour-de-force performances from O'Connell and pop star Miyavi, who makes his professional acting debut.

The twisted relationship between sworn enemies is intricately sketched by the four scriptwriters, including a scene in which The Bird whips Zamperini with his buckled belt then offers the bloody American



A scene from *Unbroken*, featuring Jack O'Connell

Picture: PA Photo/
Universal Pictures

some tissue paper for his wounds. "Why do you make me hit you?" wonders the Japanese commander aloud.

Jolie's direction is assured including gruelling scenes at sea.

Fifty-two years after his release from the PoW camp, a sprightly 80-year-old Zamperini returned to Japan as an honoured guest rather than a captive to run a leg of the Tokyo Olympics torch marathon.

With every step, he inspired friends and one-time foes to forgive and begin the seemingly impossible healing process.

CakeWhat's on Theatre

THURSDAY:
North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, Summertown, Oxford:
The Wind in the Willows. Runs until January 10. 7.30pm. Warm your feet by the fire, toast yourself a crumpet and let us thrill you with the daring adventures of Mr Toad, as his friends try to put him off his latest scheme while the seasons turn on the riverbank. £13.50 to £27. 01865 766266.

The Story Museum, Pembroke Street, Oxford: *Snow and Tell.* Runs until January 4. 5pm. Join storyteller, actor and musician Robin Hemmings for this heart-warming story and songs, and find out what the special gifts are that you can give away, and keep! *Snow and Tell* features charming adaptations of three much-loved tales: *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, *How the Robin Got His Red Breast* and Dickens'

Christmas Carol. Suitable for families and children aged three+. The performance lasts 1 hour, and has a 15-minute interval. £6/£4 or £7.50/£5. 01865 790050.

SATURDAY:
Kennington Village Hall, Kennington Road, Kennington:
Vary My Days: A New British Songcycle. 7.30pm. Songs you know and love from London's West End. The shows is an exciting new romantic drama blending showstoppers from across the eras. £10.

Music

SATURDAY:
Banbury Trades and Labour Club, West Bar Street, Banbury: Start your New Year with Banbury Soul Club. Now at its new venue. Banbury's very own DJs Charlie Mc, Steve Milsom and Tom H will be playing Northern soul, Motown, R&B and Modern. Music

is all played on original vinyl records. Friendly atmosphere, large wooden dance floor. £5 on the door. 8pm. 07528 285977.
Marston Royal British Legion, Hadow Road, Marston: Franze Black. Soloist. Covers. Free. 9pm. 01865 243991.

Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock: Dance to the music of Tequila. £3 Members. £6 non-members. 8.30pm. 01993 812094.

Events

THURSDAY:
Neo-Tulipae: The Owen Mumford Gallery, The Theatre, Spring Street, Chipping Norton. Runs until January 20. Cotswolds-based artist and photographer Terry Cripps captures the romance and drama of tulips in 27 exquisite portraits. 11am to 3pm. Free. 02082 552342.

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Puritans get first league victory for almost three months thanks to 5-1 demolition of Cirencester

United end winless run

BANBURY United recorded their first league win for 13 matches with a trouncing of in-form side Cirencester Town on Boxing Day.

A double from Leam Howards, a Jacob Walcott penalty, plus strikes from Jordan Green and Ryan Tappin won it for the visitors in a clash where both sides were reduced to ten men.

Banbury started the stronger against a team that had not lost a league game in two months, and took the lead on 13 minutes.

Green's pass picked out Howards, who slotted past Glyn Garner in the Cirencester goal from 12 yards.

Banbury doubled their lead on 36 minutes. Howards was brought down in the area by defender Ellis Duntton, who was sent off for the challenge, and Walcott fired the resulting penalty past Garner.

Two minutes before half-time, it was 3-0, when Whitehead's free-kick was knocked in by Howards from close range. Banbury kept up the pressure and scored their

Cirencester Tn 1
(Bennett 78)
Banbury Utd 5
(Howards 13, 43, Walcott pen 36, Green 53, Tappin 84)

fourth goal in the 53rd minute when Green fired in a loose ball after Howards's effort had been saved.

Three minutes later, Banbury were down to ten men when Declan Hartigan was sent off for a bad challenge.

Although Aiden Bennett pulled one back for Cirencester, Carl Tappin made it 5-1 from a Walcott pass to seal Banbury's first league win since October 4.

Despite the victory, the Puritans remain bottom of the Evo-Stik Southern League Premier Division table.

Banbury Utd: Bedwell, Cray, Martin, Westbrook, Tappin, Ryan, Green (Martin 58), Hartigan, Howards (Brown 74), Walcott, Whitehead. Subs not used: Strafford, Smith. **Attendance:** 133.



Leam Howards bagged two goals for the Puritans in their 5-1 victory over Cirencester Town

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ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 19

Aries This week you get to see the many benefits of the experiences you went through. Time spent with new faces in business helps you realise you can afford to aim higher. Watch out for friends using your cash for their own. Keep finances under control this week! Ring now to make the most of your stars.

0906 585 4360



LIBRA

Sep 23-Oct 22

Libra It would seem that you're getting the cards all about legal or official. You find out you have been worrying unnecessarily about many things in your life lately. Your confidence is given a boost by the amount of time a close one now wants to spend with you. You've picked yourself up and dusted yourself off and you're back. It's nice to see you again Libra! Ring now for a career revelation.

0906 585 4366



TAURUS

Apr 20-May 20

Taurus Monday's full moon could see you making more of a fall out than is necessary. Try not to end friendships or relationships which you know you value. You may end up putting yourself out in the cold with someone you genuinely enjoy having in your life. Once the full moon has passed you'll soon realise what and who is important to you this year. Call now for an incredible love prediction.

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SCORPIO

Oct 23-Nov 21

Scorpio It would seem that you're burning the candle at both ends and you don't seem to have slowed down since Christmas. Are you really full of energy, or are you avoiding dealing with the real issues which are on your mind Scorpio? What you're facing is solvable if you'd admit what you want. Doing so before Tuesday will liberate you. Ring now for the support and confidence you deserve.

0906 585 4367



GEMINI

May 21-Jun 20

Gemini A stubborn mood could see you insisting you're right about something you're wrong over. Try not to let arrogance take the place of patience this week. Knowing your facts is half the battle my friend. Time spent with family this weekend helps you find out what those dramatics over Christmas were really all about. Ring now to hear which sign has been keeping secrets from you recently.

0906 585 4362



SAGITTARIUS

Nov 22-Dec 21

Sagittarius Monday's full moon brings work issues to a head and you'll be saying exactly what you feel, rather than what others expect you to say. Even though the full moon forces issues, this can actually be a constructive action for once, as you finally admit what's been fuelling your stubborn and uncommunicative attitude. Ring now to hear why it's worth acting on instant attractions.

0906 585 4368



CANCER

Jun 21-Jul 22

Cancer You're thinking of doing something which could well change the course of your life. Slow down Cancer and take in the enormity of what is going on around you. Time spent with those who know you well can help you get to grips with who you are and where you want to go with your life. Travel plans make life exciting and Thursday. Ring now so I can reveal your future.

0906 585 4363



CAPRICORN

Dec 22-Jan 19

Capricorn It's going to have to be prepared to work harder this week, which may mean dreaded overtime. Travelling in the name of your work can boost your career and your finances. Watch out for someone from your past trying to get something from you that they have no right to have. Remember what you went through with them in the past. Ring now to hear who will treat you as you deserve.

0906 585 4369



LEO

Jul 23-Aug 22

Leo You may have to pay out more than you'd like for things which you don't think are entirely your responsibility. You may have no say in the matter now, but you will by Friday, so try not to show yourself in an immature light, or you will regret it later. News from far away gives you reason to get excited about the summer. Give me a call to hear why you're feeling edge about work.

0906 585 4364



AQUARIUS

Jan 20-Feb 18

Aquarius Family prove more tiresome than usual and you may have to run around for someone who feels unable to do their own chores or errands. Either do it and don't moan or don't bother, as with the full moon any moods or tempers will not be tolerated. Time spent on written work, emails and contracts pays dividends. Ring now to hear who's putting their life on hold for you.

0906 585 4370



VIRGO

Aug 23-Sep 22

Virgo You really do know how to turn on the charm when you want to, don't you Virgo? Try not to say things you don't mean to those who are around you this week, or you could be responsible for leading on someone who has placed their heart on the line. Foreign names and accents help you make a contact you've long desired midweek. Ring now for the full story on that drama.

0906 585 4365



PISCES

Feb 19-Mar 20

Pisces The only reason you're not getting the support you want from friends and family is because you haven't even convinced yourself, let alone anyone else, that you're serious about the changes on your mind. Taking time out to make the decision is the hardest part Pisces. The rest is easy! A drama from last weekend is worth overlooking. Give me a ring now to hear why.

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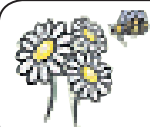
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